

I. Amendments to the Specification

Kindly amend paragraph [0014], as follows:

[0014] In addition to the distortion problem described above, another problem with known mold designs is where the neck ring halves do not seal against the core when they are closed (assembled), and the mold is then closed and clamped. After the mold has been opened and the part is ejected, the neck ring halves 18a and 18b that are carried forward by the stripper plate 40 are separated from each other. Before the next molding cycle can commence, the ejection mechanism must be reversed to restore the neck rings and stripper plate to their molding positions, shown in Figure 1. This reversing procedure includes moving the neck rings towards each other until they touch during the backward stroke of the stripper plate so that, by the time the stripper plate has fully returned (in the position shown in Figure 1), the neck rings are completely closed with their mutual parting surfaces touching. The complete closing of the neck rings can be performed at any point during the stroke of the return of the stripper plate as the neck rings are not in any danger of touching the core at any point.

Kindly amend paragraph [0057], as follows:

[0057] Figure 8 is a cross-sectional schematic view of the preferred embodiment showing the second stage of preform stripping (or ejection) according to the present invention. In Fig. 8, the ejector plate 300 and the lock ring 441 have ceased movement in the stripping direction, but the stripper plate 401 has moved the ring halves 418a, 418b further in the stripping direction, typically by an additional 100 mm or 4 in. for an additional 1 second after the first stripping stage is completed. In this stage, the sealing surface 201 of the preform is exposed for air cooling while the preform 402 is carried further in the stripping direction. Also, the interior 456 of the preform 402 may still be in the nonsolid state. The respective portions of the core 420 and the lock ring 401 are also exposed for air cooling. While the preferred embodiment envisages equal movement (in distance and time) of the stripper plate and the ejector plate, these plates can move different distances and/or times in the first stage. Furthermore, three or more stages of movement (in distance and/or time) may be used, depending on the molding system and the molded article. Fig. 5 shows a point in the stripping process where the preform 402 is moved further in the ejection direction, partially removed from the core 420.